

FROM DANTE TO SAINT CATHERINE

the *contrade*, or wards, into which the three terzi of the city were divided.¹ The *Concilium Campanae*, or Council of the Bell, elected the executive officials of the State, as usual from out of the lesser nobles of other Italian cities : the Podesta, the chief judicial officer, and the *Conservatory* or *Capitano di Guerra*, later called the Senator, who led the forces of the Republic in time of war. But the Captain of the People, in the fourteenth century, was always a Sienese plebeian.

After the exclusion of the nobles or *gentiluomini* (*milites*) from the administration, in the third quarter of the thirteenth century, Siena had enjoyed a period of considerable prosperity under the oligarchical rule of the " good merchants of the Guelf party," the chief council or magistracy of the Nine. The Nine held office for two months, lived at the expense of the State, and (to the complete exclusion of the lower orders no less than of the nobles) were elected from the rich and enlightened burgher class, corresponding, more or less, to the *popolani grassi* of Florence. In Siena the orders that held sway successively were known as *Monti*. The adherents and families of this *Monte del Nove* are famous in Sienese history as the Noveschi. The epoch of their rule, when Siena gained the title of *amoroso, madre di dolcezza*^ is that pictured to us in those vivid little masterpieces, the sonnets of Folgore da San Gimignano. Early in the fourteenth century, they had purchased the port of Talamone, by which they hoped to make the Republic a great maritime power, even as Pisa in the past; but the unhealthiness of the situation, and the impossibility of keeping the harbour clear, soon damped their ardour. The sanguinary feuds of the nobles—the Tolomei against the Salimbeni, the Malavolti against the Piccolomini, the Saracini against the Scotti —kept the State in chronic disturbance ; plots and tumults against the burgher oligarchy, usually hatched by a combination of nobles

¹ Cf. R. L. Dougka, *History of Siena*, pp. 108-114; E. Armstrong, *The Sienese Statutes of 1262* (on L. Zdekauer's great work, *II Constituto del Comune di Siena delP anno 1262*, Milan, 1897), in the *English Historical Review*, vol. **xv.**, London, 1900; G. Caneatnni, *Delia MtSzia ItaBana dal secolo XIII. al XVI.*, pp. xvii., xix.